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**Rhode Island General Assembly
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Comments on House Bill 6205
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**Comments from
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Chair Bennett and members of the Committee, the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) appreciates this opportunity to provide comments in opposition to House Bill 6205, which creates an extended producer responsibility program (EPR) for packaging and paper but does not include a beverage container deposit program. IBWA has always been a strong advocate for recycling and supports comprehensive, multi-industry approaches to recycling and solid waste management. However, we believe that the best option for Rhode Island to address the litter problem in the state would be support for both EPR and a beverage container deposit program.

IBWA is the trade association representing all segments of the bottled water industry, including spring, artesian, mineral, sparkling, well, groundwater and purified bottled waters. IBWA represents bottled water bottlers, distributors, and suppliers throughout the United States, including several small, medium, and large-size companies doing business in Rhode Island. IBWA's stated mission is to serve the members and the public by championing bottled water as an important choice for healthy hydration and lifestyle and promoting an environmentally responsible and sustainable industry.

IBWA does not believe that an EPR system alone as described in HB 6205 would sufficiently handle the needs of the state when it comes to waste management, waste diversion, material collection, and recycling. A recent poll citing that 85% of Rhode Island voters have concerns with litter in the state and 65% stating it is of great concern; it should be imperative that lawmakers find the best solution to tackle the issue that has the best results.

A broader, more comprehensive approach to tackling these issues can be better addressed with support of House Bill 6207 which combines both EPR and a beverage container deposit program. Some of the major benefits of taking a combined approach are:

- Increased recycling rates in the state, which have the potential of achieving up to 75% for all packaging and paper and above 90% for beverage containers.

- The creation of a significant amount of new, green jobs by boosting recycling and waste industry employment. One study found that bottle bills create up to 38 times more jobs than a curbside recycling beverage container system alone.
- A dramatic decrease in beverage container litter. A quick look at the states that have deposit programs show a major increase in the amount of material redeemed and recycled – significantly more than non-bottle bill states.
- Support for work being done by major producers to achieve recycled content use goals. Additional material recycled means higher volumes of high-quality material for domestic manufacturers to use to make new containers instead of using new or imported materials.
- Savings to taxpayers, which could be as high as \$15 million per year as litter cleanup and landfill disposal charges shift from municipalities to industry in addressing the cost of recycling collection.

When looking at Rhode Island's jobs and economy, it is important to note that the bottled water industry is a strong economic driver in the state. Companies in Rhode Island that manufacture, distribute, and sell bottled water employ as many as 855 people in the state and generate an additional 1,040 jobs in supplier and ancillary industries. Examples of such employment include jobs in companies that supply goods and services to manufacturers, distributors, and retailers, as well as those that depend on sales to workers in the bottled water industry. The jobs currently generated by the bottled water industry in Rhode Island are good jobs, paying an average of \$63,600 in wages and benefits.

Not only does the manufacture and sale of bottled water create good jobs in Rhode Island, but the industry also contributes to the economy as a whole. In fact, the bottled water industry is responsible for over \$352 million in total economic activity in the state. The industry also generates sizable tax revenues. In Rhode Island, the bottled water industry and its employees pay over \$15 million in business taxes, while sales drive another \$12.6 million in consumption taxes.

In conclusion, IBWA and its members, both in Rhode Island and throughout the United States, strive to make a product that is healthy, refreshing, and considers the environmental impact of our products, both in manufacturing and waste management. IBWA is a strong advocate for comprehensive, multi-industry approaches to recycling and solid waste management that examine all types of programs that offer workable solutions.

An EPR-only system just does not do enough to take on the challenges of an outdated recycling and waste management system in the state. For this reason, IBWA cannot support HB 6205 but would instead encourage lawmakers to consider support for HB 6207, the combined EPR and deposit system legislation that can ensure comprehensive high-performance recycling for Rhode Island.